INSIGHTS SUMMARY
CREATING ON-RAMPS FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE DIGITAL FUTURE

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We would like to thank the following opening speakers:

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The inexorable march of digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI) presents vast opportunities and stark challenges. To truly harness its potential, we must forge pathways that ensure a future where technological advancements are inclusive and benefit every part of society.

INSIGHT 1: ETHICALLY ADOPT DIGITAL TOOLS TO PRESERVE LIVELIHOODS

The rapid encroachment of technologies like AI and automation into mainstream sectors undeniably boosts efficiencies. However, these advancements also shine a spotlight on the looming spectre of job displacement. It is imperative for organisations, whether public or private, to roll out these technologies with an acute awareness of their societal impact. This involves not merely integrating the latest tools but doing so in a way that prioritises human welfare. By creating opportunities for upskilling and retraining, organisations can offer a safety net for workers, enabling them to navigate, adapt and excel in the transformed job landscape. Furthermore, there is an urgent need for policymakers to craft strategies that balance technological progress with employment sustainability.

The architecture of trust centres around anchoring it in the bedrock of what is already trusted and building up from there.

Welby Leaman, Senior Director, Global Public Policy, Walmart

Whenever you layer AI and other technological tools on top of an organisation or society that has deeply entrenched biases already in its organisation, it just exacerbates and accelerates those biases.

Drew Keller, Director, Institute for the Study of Business in Global Society, Harvard Business School
INSIGHT 2: ADDRESS BIASES AND AMPHIFY BENEFITS TO LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES

The increasing reliance on algorithms, while often efficient, brings to the fore the challenge of inherent biases. These biases, if unchecked, threaten to exacerbate existing inequalities. Therefore, a rigorous process of identification, evaluation and rectification is crucial to ensure fair and equitable outcomes. Beyond just addressing biases, the transformative potential of AI can be channelled to serve low-income communities. However, the stakes are distinctly higher in such contexts. While the ramifications of an AI misstep in certain sectors may be inconsequential, in areas such as agriculture, the implications can be profoundly adverse. Instead of giving AI unilateral control, a more prudent approach would be to use it as a tool for enhanced learning and guidance, thereby ensuring its benefits are harnessed without jeopardising livelihoods.

INSIGHT 3: EMPOWER MSMES FOR A DIGITAL-READY FUTURE

The role of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in bolstering economies is pivotal. Nevertheless, many MSMEs are at a disadvantage, often lacking the knowledge and resources to leverage AI and other digital tools. To truly democratise the digital future, there is a pressing need to fortify these enterprises. This can be achieved through symbiotic partnerships with larger corporates and supportive government policies. These collaborations should focus on imparting knowledge and best practices while offering digital tools tailored for MSMEs. In this way, MSMEs can not only enhance their operational efficiencies but also gain a competitive edge in an increasingly digital marketplace.

IN SUMMARY

As we stride into a digital future, our approach should be marked by inclusivity and forethought. By embedding ethics in our adoption of technology, actively countering biases and uplifting MSMEs, we ensure that the digital era is marked not just by progress, but also by fairness and shared prosperity.